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Omnipotent Government
by Ludwig von Mises

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PART III GERMAN NAZISM

VI. THE PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS OF GERMAN NATIONALISM

1. *The Awakening*

German nationalism did not differ from other peoples' nationalism until—in the late 1870s and early 1880s—the German nationalists made what they believed to be a great discovery. They discovered that their nation was the strongest in Europe. They concluded that Germany was therefore powerful enough to subdue Europe or even the whole world. Their reasoning ran as follows:

The Germans are the most numerous people in Europe, Russia excepted. The Reich itself has within the boundaries drawn by Bismarck more inhabitants than any other European country, with the same exception. Outside the Reich's borders many millions of German-speaking people are living, all of whom, according to the principle of nationality, should join the Reich. Russia, they said, should not be considered since it is not a homogeneous nation but a conglomeration of many different nationalities. If you deduct from Russia's population figures the Poles, Finns, Estonians, Letts, Lithuanians, White Russians, the Caucasian and Mongolian tribes, the Georgians, the Germans in the Baltic provinces and on the banks of the Volga, and especially the Ukrainians, there remain only the Great Russians, who are fewer in number than the Germans. Besides, Germany's population is increasing faster than that of other European nations and much faster than that of the "hereditary" foe, France.

The German nation enjoys the enormous advantage of occupying the central part of Europe. It thus dominates strategically the whole of Europe and some parts of Asia and Africa. It enjoys in warfare the advantages of standing on interior lines.

The German people are young and vigorous, while the Western nations are old and degenerate. The Germans are diligent, virtuous, and ready to fight. The French are morally corrupt, the idol of the British is mammon and profit, the Italians are weaklings, the Russians are barbarians.

The Germans are the best warriors. That the French are no match for them has been proved by the battles of Rossbach, Katzbach, Leipzig, Waterloo, St. Privat, and Sedan. The Italians always take to their heels. The military inferiority of Russia was evidenced in the Crimea and in the last war with the Turks. English land power has always been contemptible. Britain rules the waves only because the Germans, politically disunited, have in the past neglected the establishment of sea power. The deeds of the old Hanse clearly proved Germany's maritime genius.

It is therefore obvious that the German nation is predestined for hegemony. God, fate, and history chose the Germans when they endowed them with their great qualities. But unfortunately this blessed nation has not yet discovered what its right and its duty demand. Oblivious of their historic mission, the Germans have indulged in internal antagonisms. Germans have fought each other. Christianity has weakened their innate warlike ardor. The Reformation has split the nation into two hostile camps. The Habsburg emperors have misused the Empire's forces for the selfish interests of their dynasty. The other princes have betrayed the nation by supporting the French invaders. The Swiss and the Dutch have seceded. But now finally the day of the Germans has dawned. God has sent to his chosen people their saviors, the Hohenzollerns. They have revived the genuine Teutonic spirit, the spirit of Prussia. They have freed the people from the yoke of the Habsburgs and of the Roman Church. They will march on and on. They will establish the German *imperium mundi*. It is every German's duty to support them to

the extent of his own ability; thus he serves his own best interests. Every doctrine by which Germany's foes attempt to weaken the German soul and hinder it in accomplishing its task must be radically weeded out. A German who preaches peace is a traitor and must be treated as such.

The first step of the new policy must consist in the reincorporation of all Germans now outside. The Austrian Empire must be dismembered. All its countries which until 1866 were parts of the German Federation must be annexed (this includes all Czechs and Slovenes). The Netherlands and Switzerland must be reunited with the Reich, and so must the Flemings of Belgium, and the Baltic provinces of Russia, whose upper classes speak German. The army must be strengthened until it can accomplish these conquests. A navy has to be built strong enough to smash the British fleet. Then the most valuable British and French colonies must be annexed. The Dutch East Indies and the Congo State will come automatically under German rule with the conquest of the mother countries. In South America the Reich must occupy a vast area where at least thirty million Germans can settle.[i]

This program assigned a special task to the German emigrants living in different foreign countries. They were to be organized by nationalist emissaries, to whom the consular service of the Reich should give moral and financial backing. In countries which were to be conquered by the Reich they were to form a vanguard. In the other countries they were by political action to bring about a sympathetic attitude on the part of the government. This was especially planned in regard to the German-Americans, as the plan was to keep the United States neutral as long as possible.

2. The Ascendancy of Pan-Germanism

Pan-Germanism was an achievement of intellectuals and writers. The professors of history, law, economics, political science, geography, and philosophy were its most uncompromising advocates. They converted the students of the universities to their ideas. Very soon the graduates made more converts. As teachers in the field of higher education (in the famous German *Gymnasium* and educational institutions of the same rank), as lawyers, judges, civil servants, and diplomats they had ample opportunity to serve their cause.

All other strata of the population resisted the new ideas for some time. They did not want more wars and conquests; they wanted to live in peace. They were, as the nationalists scornfully observed, selfish people, not eager to die but to enjoy life.

The popular theory that the Junkers and officers, big business and finance, and the middle classes were the initiators of German nationalism is contrary to fact. All these groups were at first strongly opposed to the aspirations of Pan-Germanism. But their resistance was vain because it lacked an ideological backing. There were no longer any liberal authors in Germany. Thus the nationalist writers and professors easily conquered. Very soon the youth came back from the universities and lower schools convinced Pan-Germans. By the end of the century Germany was almost unanimous in its approval of Pan-Germanism.

Businessmen and bankers were for many years the sturdiest opponents of Pan-Germanism. They were more familiar with foreign conditions than were the nationalists. They knew that France and Great Britain were not decadent, and that it would be very difficult to conquer the world. They did not want to imperil their foreign trade and investments through wars. They did not believe that armored cruisers could accomplish the tasks of commercial travelers and bring them higher profits. They were afraid of the budgetary consequences of greater armaments. They wanted increased sales, not booty. But it was easy for the nationalists to silence these plutocratic opponents. All important offices soon came into the hands of men whom university training had imbued with nationalist ideas. In the statist state entrepreneurs are at the mercy of officialdom. Officials enjoy discretion to decide questions on which the existence of every firm depends. They are practically free to ruin any entrepreneur they want to. They had the power not only to silence these objectors but even to force them to contribute to the party funds of nationalism. In the trade associations of businessmen the syndics (executives) were supreme. Former pupils of the Pan-German university teachers, they tried to outdo each other in nationalist radicalism. Thus they sought to please the government officials and further their own careers through successful intercession on behalf of the interests of their members.

German nationalism was not, as the Marxians insist, the "ideological superstructure of the selfish class interests of the armaments industry." In the 1870s Germany possessed—apart from the Krupp plant—only comparatively small and not very profitable armament works. There is not the slightest evidence for the assumption that they subsidized the contemporary nationalist free-lance writers. They had nothing whatever to do with the much more

effective propaganda of the university teachers. The large capital invested in munitions works since the 1880s has been rather a consequence than the cause of German armaments.[ii]Of course every businessman is in favor of tendencies that may result in an increase in his sales. "Soap capital" desires more cleanliness, "building capital" a greater demand for homes, "publishing capital" more and better education, and "armaments capital" bigger armaments. The shortrun interests of every branch of business encourage such attitudes. In the long run, however, increased demand results in an inflow of more capital into the booming branch, and the competition of the new enterprises cuts down the profits.

The dedication of a greater part of Germany's national income to military expenditure correspondingly reduced that part of the national income that could be spent by individual consumers for their own consumption. In proportion as armaments increased the sales of munition plants, they reduced the sales of all other industries. The more subtle Marxians do not maintain that the nationalist authors have been bribed by munitions capital but that they have "unconsciously" supported its interests. But this implies that they have to the same extent "unconsciously" hurt the interests of the greater part of the German entrepreneurs and capitalists. What made the "world soul," which directs the working of philosophers and writers against their will, and forces them to adjust their ideas to the lines prescribed by inevitable trends of evolution, so partial as to favor some branches of business at the expense of other, more numerous branches?

It is true that since the beginning of our century almost all German capitalists and entrepreneurs have been nationalists. But so were, even to a greater degree, all other strata, groups, and classes of Germany. This was the result of nationalist education. This was an achievement of authors like Lagarde, Peters, Langbehn, Treitschke, Schmoller, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Naumann.

It is not true that the Berlin court, the Junkers, and the aristocratic officers sympathized from the beginning with the Pan-German ideas. The Hohenzollerns and their retainers had sought Prussian hegemony in Germany and at an increase in German prestige in Europe. They had attained these goals and were satisfied. They did not want more. They were anxious to preserve the German caste system, with the privileges of the dynasties and of the aristocracy; this was more important for them than the struggle for world domination. They were not enthusiastic about the construction of a strong navy or about colonial expansion. Bismarck yielded unwillingly to colonial plans.

But courts and noblemen were unable to offer successful resistance to a popular movement supported by intellectuals. They had long since lost all influence on public opinion. They derived an advantage from the defeat of liberalism, the deadly foe of their own privileges. But they themselves had contributed nothing to the ascendancy of the new etatist ideas; they simply profited by the change of mentality. They regarded the nationalist ideas as somewhat dangerous. Pan-Germanism was full of praise for old Prussia and its institutions, for the conservative party in its capacity as adversary of liberalism, for the army and the navy, for the commissioned officers and for the nobility. But the Junkers disliked one point in the nationalist mentality which seemed to them democratic and revolutionary. They considered the nationalist commoners' interference with foreign policy and military problems a piece of impudence. In their eyes these two fields were the exclusive domain of the sovereign. While the support which the nationalists granted to the government's domestic policies pleased them, they regarded as a kind of rebellion the fact that the Pan-Germans had views of their own about "higher politics." The court and the nobles seemed to doubt the right of the people even to applaud their achievements in these fields.

But all such qualms were limited to the older generations, to the men who had reached maturity before the foundation of the new Empire. William II and all his contemporaries were already nationalists. The rising generation could not protect itself from the power of the new ideas. The schools taught them nationalism. They entered the stage of politics as nationalists. True, when in public office, they were obliged to maintain a diplomatic reserve. Thus it happened time and again that the government publicly rebuked the Pan-Germans and sharply rejected suggestions with which it secretly sympathized. But as officialdom and Pan-Germans were in perfect agreement about ultimate aims, such incidents were of little importance.

The third group which opposed radical nationalism was Catholicism. But Catholicism's political organization, the Center party, was neither prepared nor mentally fitted to combat a great intellectual evolution. Its method consisted simply in yielding to every popular trend and trying to use it for its own purposes, the preservation and improvement of the Church's position. The Center's only principle was Catholicism. For the rest it had neither principles nor convictions, it was purely opportunist. It did everything from which success in the next election campaign could be expected. It coöperated, according to changing conditions, at one time with the Protestant

conservatives, at another with the nationalists, at another with the Social Democrats. It worked with the Social Democrats in 1918 to overthrow the old system and later in the Weimar Republic. But in 1933 the Center was ready to share power in the Third Reich with the Nazis. The Nazis frustrated these designs. The Center was not only disappointed but indignant when its offer was refused.

The Center party had organized a powerful system of Christian labor unions which formed one of its most valuable auxiliaries and was eager to call itself a working man's party. As such it considered it its duty to further Germany's export trade. The economic ideas generally accepted by German public opinion maintained that the best means of increasing exports was a great navy and an energetic foreign policy. Since the German pseudo-economists viewed every import as a disadvantage and every export as an advantage, they could not imagine how foreigners could be induced to buy more German products by other means than by "an impressive display of German naval power." As most of the professors taught that whoever opposes increased armaments furthers unemployment and a lowering of the standard of living, the Center in its capacity as a labor party could not vigorously resist the nationalist extremists. Besides, there were other considerations. The territories marked first for annexation in Pan-Germanism's program for conquest were inhabited mainly by Catholics. Their incorporation was bound to strengthen the Reich's Catholic forces. Could the Center regard such plans as unsound?

Only liberalism would have had the power to antagonize PanGermanism. But there were no more liberals left in Germany.

3. German Nationalism Within an Etatist World

German nationalism differs from that of other European countries only in the fact of the people's believing itself to be the strongest in Europe. Pan-Germanism and its heir, Nazism, are the application of general nationalist doctrines to the special case of the most populous and most powerful nation, which is, however, in the unlucky position of being dependent on imported foodstuffs and raw materials.

German nationalism is not the outcome of innate Teutonic brutality or rowdyism. It does not stem from blood or inheritance. It is not a return of the grandsons to the mentality of their Viking ancestors; the Germans are not the descendants of the Vikings. The forefathers of the Germans of our day were German tribes (who did *not* participate in the invasions which gave the last blow to ancient civilization), Slavonic and Baltic tribes of the northeast, and Celtic aborigines of the Alps. There is more non-German than German "blood" in the veins of present-day Germans. The Scandinavians, the genuine scions of the Vikings, have a different type of nationalism and apply different political methods from those of the Germans. No one can tell whether the Swedes, if they were as numerous as the Germans are today, would in our age of nationalism have adopted the methods of Nazism. Certainly the Germans, if they had not been more numerous than the Swedes, would not have succumbed to the mentality of world conquest.

The Germans invented neither interventionism nor etatism, with their inevitable result, nationalism. They imported these doctrines from abroad. They did not even invent the most conspicuous chauvinistic adornment of their own nationalism, the fable of Aryanism.

It is easy to expose the fundamental errors, fallacies, and paralogisms of German nationalism if one places oneself on the sound basis of scientific praxeology and economics and the practical philosophy of liberalism derived from them. But etatists are helpless when trying to refute the essential statements of Pan-Germanism and Nazism. The only objection they can consistently raise to the teachings of German nationalism is that the Germans were mistaken when they assumed they could conquer all other nations. And the only weapons they can use against Nazism are military ones.

It is inconsistent for an etatist to object to German nationalism on the ground that it means coercion. The state always means coercion. But while liberalism seeks to limit the application of coercion and compulsion to a narrow field, etatists do not recognize these restrictions. For etatism coercion is the essential means of political action, indeed the only means. It is considered proper for the government of Atlantis to use armed men—i.e., customs and immigration officers—in order to hinder the citizens of Thule from selling commodities on the markets of Atlantis or from working in the factories of Atlantis. But if this is so, then no effective logical argument can be brought forward against the plans of the government of Thule to defeat the armed forces of Atlantis and thus to prevent them from inflicting harm on the citizens of Thule. The only working argument for Atlantis is to repulse the aggressors.

We can see this essential matter clearly by comparing the social effects of private property and those of territorial sovereignty. Both private property and territorial sovereignty can be traced back to a point where somebody either appropriated ownerless goods or land or violently expropriated a predecessor whose title had been based on appropriation. To law and legality no other origin can be ascribed. It would be contradictory or nonsensical to assume a "legitimate" beginning. The factual state of affairs became a legitimate one by its acknowledgment by other people. Lawfulness consists in the general acceptance of the rule that no *further* arbitrary appropriations or violent expropriations shall be tolerated. For the sake of peace, security, and progress, it is agreed that in the future every change of property shall be the outcome of voluntary exchange by the parties directly concerned.

This, of course, involves the recognition of the appropriations and expropriations effected in the past. It means a declaration that the present state of distribution, although arbitrarily established, must be respected as the legal one. There was no alternative. To attempt to establish a fair order through the expropriation of all owners and an entirely new distribution would have resulted in endless wars.

Within the framework of a market society the fact that legal formalism can trace back every title either to arbitrary appropriation or to violent expropriation has lost its significance. Ownership in the market society is no longer linked up with the remote origin of private property. Those events in a far-distant past, hidden in the darkness of primitive mankind's history, are no longer of any concern for our present life. For in an unhampered market society the consumers decide by their daily buying or not buying who should own and what he should own. The working of the market daily allots anew the ownership of the means of production to those who know how to use them best for the satisfaction of consumers. Only in a legal and formalistic sense can the owners be considered the successors of appropriators and expropriators. In fact, they are the mandataries of the consumers, bound by the laws of the market to serve the wants or whims of the consumers. The market is a democracy. Capitalism is the consummation of the self-determination of consumers. Mr. Ford is richer than Mr. X because he succeeded better in serving the consumers.

But all this is not true of territorial sovereignty. Here the fact that once in a remote past a Mongolian tribe occupied the country of Tibet still has its full importance. If there should one day be discovered in Tibet precious resources that could improve the lot of every human being it would depend on the Dalai Lama's discretion whether the world should be allowed to make use of these treasures or not. His is the sovereignty of this country; his title, derived from a bloody conquest thousands of years ago, is still supreme and exclusive. This unsatisfactory state of things can be remedied only by violence, by war. Thus war is inescapable; it is the *ultima ratio*; it is the only means of solving such antagonisms—unless people have recourse to the principles of liberalism. It is precisely in order to make war unnecessary that liberalism recommends *laissez faire* and *laissez passer*, which would render political boundaries innocuous. A liberal government in Tibet would not hinder anyone from making the best use of the country's resources. If you want to abolish war, you must eliminate its causes. What is needed is to restrict government activities to the preservation of life, health, and private property, and thereby to safeguard the working of the market. Sovereignty must not be used for inflicting harm on anyone, whether citizen or foreigner.

In the world of etatism sovereignty once more has disastrous implications. Every sovereign government has the power to use its apparatus of coercion and compulsion to the disadvantage of citizens and foreigners. The gendarmes of Atlantis apply coercion against the citizens of Thule. Thule orders its army to attack the forces of Atlantis. Each country calls the other aggressor. Atlantis says: "This is our country; we are free to act within its boundaries as we like; you, Thule, have no right to interfere." Thule answers: "You have no title but earlier conquest; now you take advantage of your sovereignty to discriminate against our citizens; but we are strong enough to annul your title by superior force."

Under such conditions there is but one means to avoid war: to be so strong that no one ventures aggression against you.

4. A Critique of German Nationalism

No further critique of nationalism is needed than that provided by liberalism, which has refuted in advance all its contentions. But the plans of *German* nationalism must be considered impracticable even if we omit any reference to the doctrines of liberalism. It is simply not true that the Germans are strong enough to conquer the world. It is moreover not true that they could enjoy the victory if they succeeded.

Germany built up a tremendous military machine while other nations foolishly neglected to organize their defenses. Nevertheless Germany is much too weak, even when supported by allies, to fight the world. The arrogance of the Pan-Germans and of the Nazis was founded upon the vain hope that they would be able to fight each foreign nation as an isolated enemy in a sequence of successful wars. They did not consider the possibility of a united front of the menaced nations.

Bismarck succeeded because he was able to fight first Austria and then France, while the rest of the world kept its neutrality. He was wise enough to realize that this was due to extraordinarily fortunate circumstances. He did not expect that fate would always favor his country in the same way, and he freely admitted that the *cauchemar des coalitions* disturbed his sleep. The Pan-Germans were less cautious. But in 1914 the coalition which Bismarck had feared became a fact. And so it is again today.

Germany did not learn the lesson taught by the first World War. We shall see later, in the chapter dealing with the role of anti-Semitism, what ruse the Nazis used to disguise the meaning of this lesson.

The Nazis are convinced that they must finally conquer because they have freed themselves from the chains of morality and humanity. Thus they argue: "If we conquer, this war will be the last one, and we will establish our hegemony forever. For when we are victorious we will exterminate our foes, so that a later war of revenge or a rebellion of the subdued will be impossible. But if the British and the Americans conquer, they will grant us a passable peace. As they feel themselves bound by moral law, divine commandments, and other nonsense, they will impose on us a new Versailles, maybe something better or something worse, at any rate not extermination, but a treaty which will enable us to renew the fighting after some lapse of time. Thus we will fight again and again, until one day we will have reached our goal, the radical extermination of our foes."

Let us assume for the sake of argument that the Nazis succeed and that they impose on the world what they call a German peace. Will the satisfactory functioning of the German state be possible in such a world, whose moral foundations are not mutual understanding but oppression? Where the principles of violence and tyranny are supreme, there will always be some groups eager to gain advantage from the subjugation of the rest of the nation. Perpetual wars will result among the Germans themselves. The subdued non-German slaves may profit from these troubles in order to free themselves and to exterminate their masters. The moral code of Nazism supported Hitler's endeavors to smash by the weapons of his bands all opposition that his plans encountered in Germany. The Storm Troopers are proud of "battles" fought in beer saloons, assembly halls, and back streets,[iii] *of assassinations and felonious assaults. Whoever deemed himself strong enough would in the future too take recourse to such stratagems. The Nazi code results in endless civil wars.

The strong man, say the Nazis, is not only entitled to kill. He has the right to use fraud, lies, defamation, and forgery as legitimate weapons. Every means is right that serves the German nation. But who has to decide what is good for the German nation?

To this question the Nazi philosopher replies quite candidly: Right and noble are what I and my comrades deem such, are what the sound feelings of the people (*das gesunde Volksempfinden*) hold good, right, and fair. But whose feelings are sound and whose unsound? About that matter, say the Nazis, there can be no dispute between genuine Germans. But who is a genuine German? Whose thoughts and feelings are genuinely German and whose are not? Whose ideas are German ones—those of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller, or those of Hitler and Goebbels? Was Kant, who wanted eternal peace, genuinely German? Or are Spengler, Rosenberg, and Hitler, who call pacifism the meanest of all ideas, genuine Germans? There is dissension among men to whom the Nazis themselves do not deny the appellation German. The Nazis try to escape from this dilemma by admitting that there are some Germans who unfortunately have un-German ideas. But if a German does not always necessarily think and feel in a correct German way, who is to decide which German's ideas are German and which un-German? It is obvious that the Nazis are moving in a circle. Since they abhor as manifestly un-German decision by majority vote, the conclusion is inescapable that according to them German is whatever those who have succeeded in civil war consider to be German.

5. Nazism and German philosophy

It has been asserted again and again that Nazism is the logical outcome of German idealistic philosophy. This too is an error. German philosophical ideas played an important role in the evolution of Nazism. But the character and extent of these influences have been grossly misrepresented.

Kant's moral teachings, and his concept of the categorical imperative, have nothing at all to do with Prussianism or with Nazism. The categorical imperative is not the philosophical equivalent of the regulations of the Prussian military code. It was not one of the merits of old Prussia that in a far-distant little town a man like Kant occupied a chair of philosophy. Frederick the Great did not care a whit for his great subject. He did not invite him to his philosophical breakfast table whose shining stars were the Frenchmen Voltaire and Alembert. The concern of his successor, Frederick William II, was to threaten Kant with dismissal if he were once more insolent enough to write about religious matters. Kant submitted. It is nonsensical to consider Kant a precursor of Nazism. Kant advocated eternal peace between nations. The Nazis praise war "as the eternal shape of higher human existence"[iv] and their ideal is "to live always in a state of war." [v]

The popularity of the opinion that German nationalism is the outcome of the ideas of German philosophy is mainly due to the authority of George Santayana. However, Santayana admits that what he calls "German philosophy" is "not identical with philosophy in Germany," and that "the majority of intelligent Germans held views which German philosophy proper must entirely despise." [vi] On the other hand, Santayana declares that the first principle of German philosophy is "borrowed, indeed, from non-Germans." [vii] Now, if this nefarious philosophy is neither of German origin nor the opinion held by the majority of intelligent Germans, Santayana's statements shrink to the establishment of the fact that some German philosophers adhered to teachings first developed by non-Germans [viii] and rejected by the majority of intelligent Germans, in which Santayana believes he has discovered the intellectual roots of Nazism. But he does not explain why these ideas, although foreign to Germany and contrary to the convictions of its majority, have begotten Nazism just in Germany and not in other countries.

Then, again, speaking of Fichte and Hegel he says: "Theirs is a revealed philosophy. It is the heir of Judaism. It could never have been founded by free observation of life and nature, like the philosophy of Greece or of the Renaissance. It is Protestant theology rationalized." [ix] Exactly the same could be said with no less justification of the philosophy of many British and American philosophers.

According to Santayana the main source of German nationalism is egotism. Egotism should "not be confused with the natural egoism or self-assertion proper to every living creature." Egotism "assumes, if it does not assert, that the source of one's being and power lies in oneself, that will and logic are by right omnipotent, and that nothing should control the mind or the conscience except the mind or the conscience itself. [x] But egotism, if we are prepared to use the term as defined above by Santayana, is the starting point of the utilitarian philosophy of Adam Smith, Ricardo, Bentham, and the two Mills, father and son. Yet, these British scholars did not derive from their first principle conclusions of a Nazi character. Theirs is a philosophy of liberalism, democratic government, social coöperation, good will and peace among nations.

Neither egoism nor egotism is the essential feature of German nationalism, but rather its ideas concerning the means through which the supreme good is to be attained. German nationalists are convinced that there is an insoluble conflict between the interests of the individual nations and those of a world-embracing community of all nations. This also is not an idea of German origin. It is a very old opinion. It prevailed up to the age of enlightenment, when the above-mentioned British philosophers developed the fundamentally new concept of the harmony of the—rightly understood—interests of all individuals and of all nations, peoples, and races. As late as 1764 no less a man than Voltaire could blithely say, in the article "Fatherland" of his *Dictionary of Philosophy*: "To be a good patriot means to wish that one's own community shall acquire riches through trade and power through its arms. It is obvious that a country cannot profit but by the disadvantage of another country, and cannot be victorious but by making other peoples miserable." This identification of the effects of peaceful human coöperation and the mutual exchange of commodities and services with the effects of war and destruction is the main vice of the Nazi doctrines. Nazism is neither simple egoism nor simple egotism; it is *misguided* egoism and egotism. It is a relapse into errors long ago refuted, a return to Mercantilism and a revival of ideas described as militarism by Herbert Spencer. It is, in short, the abandonment of the liberal philosophy, today generally despised as the philosophy of Manchester and laissez faire. And its ideas are, in this respect, unfortunately not limited to Germany.

The contribution of German philosophy to the ascendancy of Nazi ideas had a character very different from that generally ascribed to it. German philosophy always rejected the teachings of utilitarian ethics and the sociology of human coöperation. German political science never grasped the meaning of social coöperation and division of labor. With the exception of Feuerbach all German philosophers scorned utilitarianism as a mean system of ethics. For them the basis of ethics was intuition. A mystical voice in his soul makes man know what is right and

what is wrong. The moral law is a restraint imposed upon man for the sake of other people's or society's interests. They did not realize that each individual serves his own—rightly understood, i.e., long-run—interests better by complying with the moral code and by displaying attitudes which further society than by indulging in activities detrimental to society. Thus they never understood the theory of the harmony of interests and the merely temporary character of the sacrifice which man makes in renouncing some immediate gain lest he endanger the existence of society. In their eyes there is an insoluble conflict between the individual's aims and those of society. They did not see that the individual must practice morality for his own, not for somebody else's or for the state's or society's welfare. The ethics of the German philosophers are heteronomous. Some mystical entity orders man to behave morally, that is to renounce his selfishness for the advantage of a higher, nobler, and more powerful being, society.

Whoever does not understand that the moral laws serve the interests of all and that there is no insoluble conflict between private and social interests is also incapable of understanding that there is no insoluble conflict between the different collective entities. The logical outcome of his philosophy is the belief in an irremediable antagonism between the interest of every nation and the whole of human society. Man must choose between allegiance to his nation and allegiance to humanity. Whatever best serves the great international society is detrimental to every nation, and vice versa. But, adds the nationalist philosopher, only the nations are true collective entities, while the concept of a great human society is illusory. The concept of humanity was a devilish brew concocted by the Jewish founders of Christianity and of Western and Jewish utilitarian philosophy in order to debilitate the Aryan master race. The first principle of morality is to serve one's own nation. Right is whatever best serves the German nation. This implies that right is whatever is detrimental to the races that stubbornly resist Germany's aspirations for world domination.

This is very fragile reasoning. It is not difficult to expose its fallacies. The Nazi philosophers are fully aware that they are unable logically to refute the teachings of liberal philosophy, economics, and sociology. And thus they resort to polylogism.

6. Polylogism

The Nazis did not invent polylogism. They only developed their own brand.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century no one ventured to dispute the fact that the logical structure of mind is unchangeable and common to all human beings. All human interrelations are based on this assumption of a uniform logical structure. We can speak to each other only because we can appeal to something common to all of us, namely, the logical structure of reason. Some men can think deeper and more refined thoughts than others. There are men who unfortunately cannot grasp a process of inference in long chains of deductive reasoning. But as far as a man is able to think and to follow a process of discursive thought, he always clings to the same ultimate principles of reasoning that are applied by all other men. There are people who cannot count further than three; but their counting, as far as it goes, does not differ from that of Gauss or Laplace. No historian or traveler has ever brought us any knowledge of people for whom *a* and non-*a* were identical, or who could not grasp the difference between affirmation and negation. Daily, it is true, people violate logical principles in reasoning. But whoever examines their inferences competently can uncover their errors.

Because everyone takes these facts to be unquestionable, men enter into discussions; they speak to each other; they write letters and books; they try to prove or to disprove. Social and intellectual coöperation between men would be impossible if this were not so. Our minds cannot even consistently imagine a world peopled by men of different logical structures or a logical structure different from our own.

Yet, in the course of the nineteenth century this undeniable fact has been contested. Marx and the Marxians, foremost among them the "proletarian philosopher" Dietzgen, taught that thought is determined by the thinker's class position. What thinking produces is not truth but "ideologies." This word means, in the context of Marxian philosophy, a disguise of the selfish interest of the social class to which the thinking individual is attached. It is therefore useless to discuss anything with people of another social class. Ideologies do not need to be refuted by discursive reasoning; they must be *unmasked* by denouncing the class position, the social background, of their authors. Thus Marxians do not discuss the merits of physical theories; they merely uncover the "bourgeois" origin of the physicists.

The Marxians have resorted to polylogism because they could not refute by logical methods the theories developed by "bourgeois" economics, or the inferences drawn from these theories demonstrating the impracticability of socialism. As they could not rationally demonstrate the soundness of their own ideas or the unsoundness of their adversaries' ideas, they have denounced the accepted logical methods. The success of this Marxian stratagem was unprecedented. It has rendered proof against any reasonable criticism all the absurdities of Marxian would-be economics and would-be sociology. Only by the logical tricks of polylogism could etatism gain a hold on the modern mind.

Polylogism is so inherently nonsensical that it cannot be carried consistently to its ultimate logical consequences. No Marxian was bold enough to draw all the conclusions that his own epistemological viewpoint would require. The principle of polylogism would lead to the inference that Marxian teachings also are not objectively true but are only "ideological" statements. But the Marxians deny it. They claim for their own doctrines the character of absolute truth. Thus Dietzgen teaches that "the ideas of proletarian logic are not party ideas but the outcome of logic pure and simple." [xi] The proletarian logic is not "ideology" but absolute logic. Present-day Marxians, who label their teachings the *sociology of knowledge*, give proof of the same inconsistency. One of their champions, Professor Mannheim, tries to demonstrate that there exists a group of men, the "unattached intellectuals," who are equipped with the gift of grasping truth without falling prey to ideological errors. [xii] Of course, Professor Mannheim is convinced that he is the foremost of these "unattached intellectuals." You simply cannot refute him. If you disagree with him, you only prove thereby that you yourself are not one of this elite of "unattached intellectuals" and that your utterances are ideological nonsense.

The German nationalists had to face precisely the same problem as the Marxians. They also could neither demonstrate the correctness of their own statements nor disprove the theories of economics and praxeology. Thus they took shelter under the roof of polylogism, prepared for them by the Marxians. Of course, they concocted their own brand of polylogism. The logical structure of mind, they say, is different with different nations and races. Every race or nation has its own logic and therefore its own economics, mathematics, physics, and so on. But, no less inconsistently than Professor Mannheim, Professor Tirala, his counterpart as champion of Aryan epistemology, declares that the only true, correct, and perennial logic and science are those of the Aryans. [xiii] In the eyes of the Marxians Ricardo, Freud, Bergson, and Einstein are wrong because they are bourgeois; in the eyes of the Nazis they are wrong because they are Jews. One of the foremost goals of the Nazis is to free the Aryan soul from the pollution of the Western philosophies of Descartes, Hume, and John Stuart Mill. They are in search of *arteigen* [xiv] German science, that is, of a science adequate to the racial character of the Germans.

We may reasonably assume as hypothesis that man's mental abilities are the outcome of his bodily features. Of course, we cannot demonstrate the correctness of this hypothesis, but neither is it possible to demonstrate the correctness of the opposite view as expressed in the theological hypothesis. We are forced to recognize that we do not know how out of physiological processes thoughts result. We have some vague notions of the detrimental effects produced by traumatic or other damage inflicted on certain bodily organs; we know that such damage may restrict or completely destroy the mental abilities and functions of men. But that is all. It would be no less than insolent humbug to assert that the natural sciences provide us with any information concerning the alleged diversity of the logical structure of mind. Polylogism cannot be derived from physiology or anatomy or any other of the natural sciences.

Neither Marxian nor Nazi polylogism ever went further than to declare that the logical structure of mind is different with various classes or races. They never ventured to demonstrate precisely in what the logic of the proletarians differs from the logic of the bourgeois, or in what the logic of the Aryans differs from the logic of the Jews or the British. It is not enough to reject wholesale the Ricardian theory of comparative cost or the Einstein theory of relativity by unmasking the alleged racial background of their authors. What is wanted is first to develop a system of Aryan logic different from non-Aryan logic. Then it would be necessary to examine point by point these two contested theories and to show where in their reasoning inferences are made which—although correct from the viewpoint of non-Aryan logic—are invalid from the viewpoint of Aryan logic. And, finally, it should be explained what kind of conclusions the replacement of the non-Aryan inferences by the correct Aryan inferences must lead to. But all this never has been and never can be ventured by anybody. The garrulous champion of racism and Aryan polylogism, Professor Tirala, does not say a word about the difference between Aryan and non-Aryan logic. Polylogism, whether Marxian or Aryan, or whatever, has never entered into details.

Polylogism has a peculiar method of dealing with dissenting views. If its supporters fail to unmask the background of an opponent, they simply brand him a traitor. Both Marxians and Nazis know only two categories of adversaries. The aliens—whether members of a nonproletarian class or of a non-Aryan race—are wrong because they are aliens; the opponents of proletarian or Aryan origin are wrong because they are traitors. Thus they lightly dispose of the unpleasant fact that there is dissension among the members of what they call their own class or race.

The Nazis contrast German economics with Jewish and Anglo-Saxon economics. But what they call German economics differs not at all from some trends in foreign economics. It developed out of the teachings of the Genevese Sismondi and of the French and British socialists. Some of the older representatives of this alleged German economics merely imported foreign thought into Germany. Frederick List brought the ideas of Alexander Hamilton to Germany, Hildebrand and Brentano brought the ideas of early British socialism. Arteigen German economics is almost identical with contemporary trends in other countries, e.g., with American Institutionalism.

On the other hand, what the Nazis call Western economics and therefore *artfremd* is to a great extent an achievement of men to whom even the Nazis cannot deny the term German. Nazi economists wasted much time in searching the genealogical tree of Carl Menger for Jewish ancestors; they did not succeed. It is nonsensical to explain the conflict between economic theory, on the one hand, and Institutionalism and historical empiricism, on the other hand, as a racial or national conflict.

Polylogism is not a philosophy or an epistemological theory. It is an attitude of narrow-minded fanatics, who cannot imagine that anybody could be more reasonable or more clever than they themselves. Nor is polylogism scientific. It is rather the replacement of reasoning and science by superstitions. It is the characteristic mentality of an age of chaos.

7. Pan-Germanism and Nazism

The essential ideas of Nazism were developed by the Pan-Germans and the socialists of the chair in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. The system was completed long before the outbreak of the first World War. Nothing was lacking and nothing but a new name was added later. The plans and policies of the Nazis differ from those of their predecessors in imperial Germany only in the fact that they are adapted to a different constellation of political conditions. The ultimate aim, German world hegemony, and the means for its attainment, conquest, have not changed.

One of the most curious facts of modern history is that the foreigners for whom this German nationalism was a menace did not sooner become aware of the danger. A few Englishmen saw through it. But they were laughed at. To Anglo-Saxon common sense the Nazi plans seemed too fantastic to be taken seriously. Englishmen, Americans, and Frenchmen seldom have a satisfactory command of the German language; they do not read German books and newspapers. English politicians who had visited Germany as tourists and had met German statesmen were regarded by their fellow countrymen as experts on German problems. Englishmen who had once attended a ball at the court in Berlin or dined in the officers' mess of a Potsdam regiment of the Royal Guards came home with the glad tidings that Germany is peace loving and a good friend of Great Britain. Proud of their knowledge acquired on the spot, they arrogantly dismissed the holders of dissenting views as "theorists and pedantic doctrinaires."

King Edward VII, himself the son of a German father and of a mother whose German family did not assimilate itself to British life, was highly suspicious of the challenging attitudes of his nephew, William II. It was to the King's credit that Great Britain, almost too late, turned toward a policy of defense and of coöperation with France and Russia. But even then the British did not realize that not the Kaiser alone but almost the whole German nation was eager for conquest. President Wilson labored under the same mistake. He too believed that the court and the Junkers were the instigators of the aggressive policy and that the people were peace loving.

Similar errors prevail today. Misled by Marxian prejudices, people cling to the opinion that the Nazis are a comparatively small group which has, through fraud and violence, imposed its yoke on the reluctant masses. They do not understand that the internal struggles which shook Germany were disputes among people who were unanimous in regard to the ultimate ends of German foreign policy. Rathenau, whom the Nazis assassinated, was one of the outstanding literary champions both of German socialism and of German nationalism. Stresemann, whom the Nazis disparaged as pro-Western, was in the years of the first World War one of the most radical

advocates of the so-called German peace—i.e., the annexation of huge territories at both western and eastern borders of the Reich. His Locarno policy was a make-shift devised to give Germany a free hand in the East. If the communists had seized power in Germany, they would not have adopted a less aggressive policy than the Nazis did. Strasser, Rauschning, and Hugenberg were personal rivals of Hitler, not opponents of German nationalism.

[i]In order to demonstrate that this last demand, which could be realized only by a victorious war against the United States, was endorsed not only by hotspurs but also by more moderate men, whom the radical nationalists scorned for their leniency and indifference, we need only quote a dictum of Gustav von Schmoller, Schmoller was the universally recognized head of the German socialists of the chair, professor of political science at the University of Berlin, permanent adviser of the Reich government on economic problems, member of the Prussian chamber of Lords and of the Prussian academy. His compatriots and German officialdom considered him the greatest economist of the age and great economic historian. The words which we quote are to be found in a book published in Stuttgart in 1900 under the title, *Handels- und Machtpolitik, Reden und Aufsätze im Auftrage der Freien Vereinigung für Flottenvorträge*, edited by Gustav Schmoller, Adolf Wagner, and Max Sering, Professors of Political Science at the University of Berlin, in I, 35, 36. They are: "I cannot dwell on the details of the commercial and colonial tasks for which we need the navy. Only some points may be mentioned briefly. We are bound to wish at all costs that in the coming century a German country of twenty or thirty million Germans be established in Southern Brazil. It is immaterial whether this remain a part of our Reich. Without communications continually safeguarded by battleships, without Germany's standing ready for vigorous interference in these countries, this evolution would be exposed to peril."

Still more outspoken than Schmoller was his colleague Adolf Wagner, whose fame and official prestige were almost as great. Speaking of the wars to which the endeavor to find dwelling places for the excess German population is bound to lead, of the coming "struggle for space," he adds: "Idle pretensions like the American Monroe Doctrine . . . are not an insurmountable obstacle." (*Agrar- und Industriestaat*, 2d ed. Jena, 1902, p. 83.) Such were the views of old professors, not of boasting youths. It would be easy to quote hundreds of similar comments.

[ii]Of the five iron armored battleships which the Germans had in the Franco-German war of 1870, three were built in England and two in France. It was only late that Germany developed a domestic industry of naval armaments.

[iii]The old Storm Troopers call themselves proudly *Saalkämpfer*, i.e., beer-hall fighters.

[iv]Spengler, *Preussentum und Sozialismus* (Munich, 1925), p. 54.

[v]Th. Fritsch in "Hammer" (194), p. 541, as quoted by Hertz, *Nationalgeist und Politik* (Zurich, 1937), I, 467.

[vi]Santayana, *Egotism in German Philosophy* (new ed. London, 1939), p. 1.

[vii]Santayana, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[viii]Speaking of Fichte, Mr. Santayana (*op. cit.*, p. 21) says that his philosophy "was founded on one of Locke's errors."

[ix]Santayana, *op. cit.*, p. 11

[x]*Idem*, p. 151.

[xi]Dietzgen, *Briefe über Logik, speziell demokratisch-proletarische Logik* (2d ed. Stuttgart, 1903), p. 112.

[xii]Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London, 1936), pp. 137 ff.

[xiii]Tirala, *Rasse, Geist und Seele* (Munich, 1935), pp. 190 ff.

[xiv]The word *arteigen* is one of the many German terms coined by the Nazis. It is a main concept of their polylogism. Its counterpart is *artfremd*, or alien to the racial character. The criterion of science and truth is no longer correct or incorrect, but *arteigen* or *artfremd*.

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